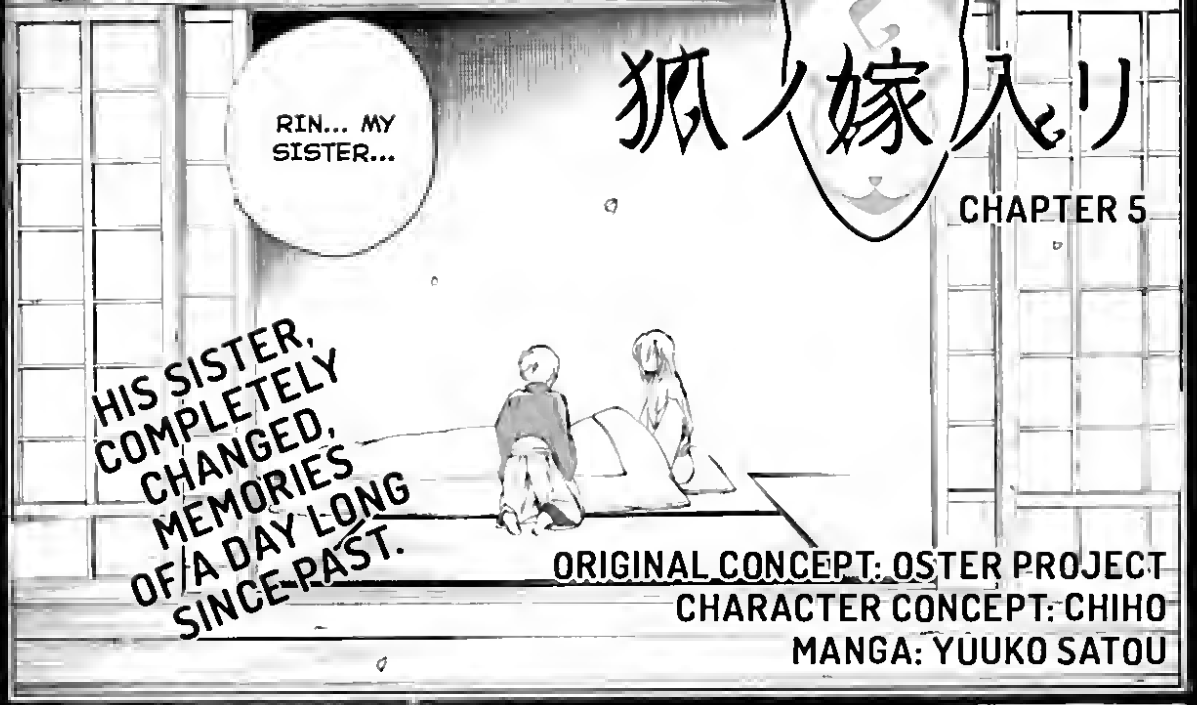
The Fox's Wedding

狐嫁入り

CHAPTER 5



ORIGINAL CONCEPT: OSTER PROJECT
CHARACTER CONCEPT: CHIHO
MANGA: YUUKO SATOU

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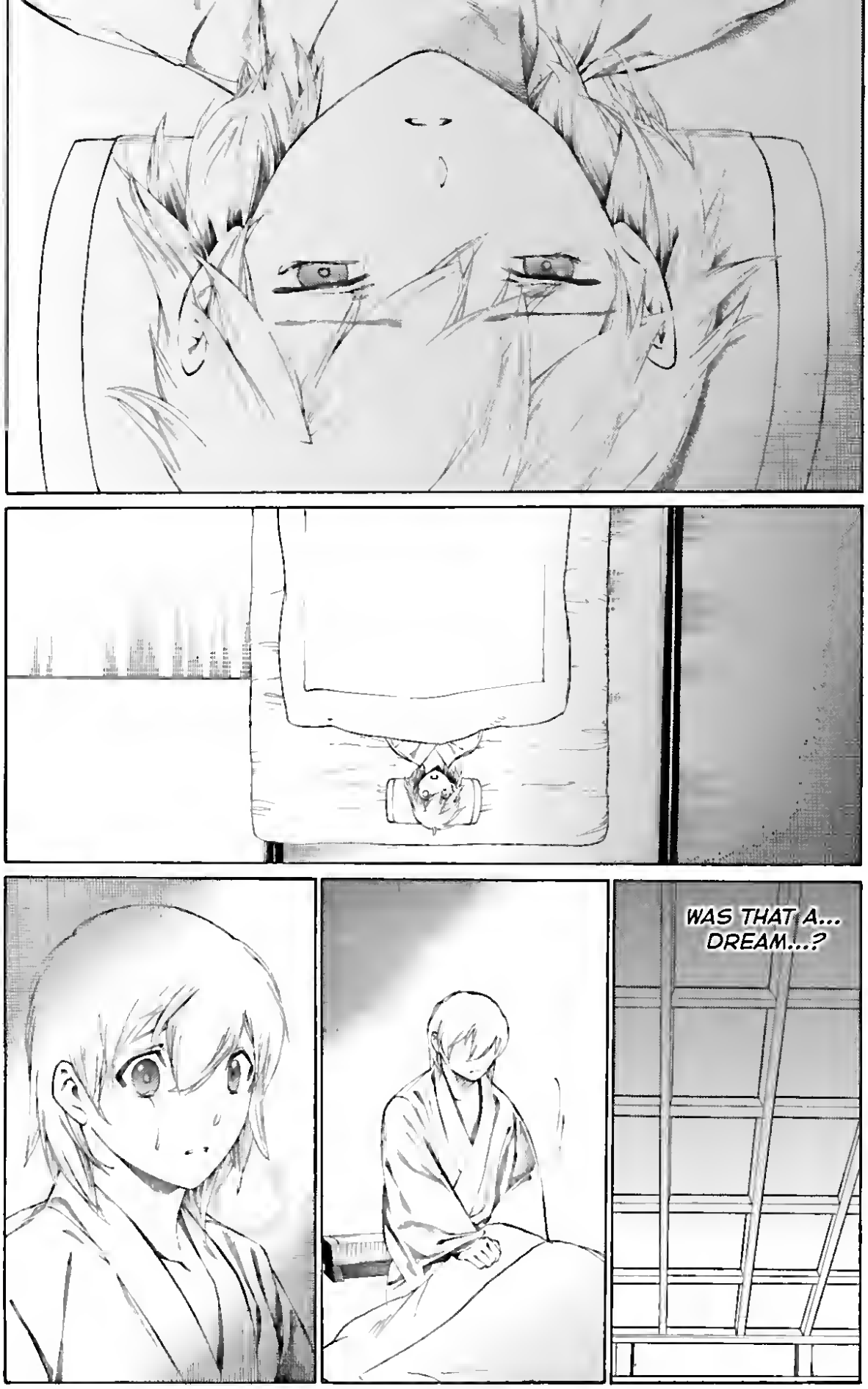
GRAB
...HERE, FOOD.
CLAK

PLEASE, USE YOUR CHOP-STICKS...
RIN?!
RIN... KEEP YOUR KIMONO ON...

YOU'VE FORGOTTEN EVERYTHING, RIN...
WHY... WHY DID THIS HAPPEN ...?
EVEN ME...
EVEN HATSU-NE...
WHY DID I HAVE TO GO INTO THE MOUN-TAIN...?
WHY DIDN'T I LISTEN TO YOU, RIN...?!

LEN...
DON'T CRY...


WAS THAT A...
DREAM...?

I'LL WIPE
IT WAS A MEMORY OF WHAT HAPPENED RIGHT AFTER WE WERE "SPIRITED AWAY..."
NO...
THE DOCTOR SAID THAT BEING "SPIRITED AWAY" HAD LEFT DEEP SCARS ON HER HEART AND MIND...
RIN LOST HER MEMORIES, NOT JUST OF ME AND HATSUNE, BUT ALSO OF HOW TO SPEAK...
...SIX MONTHS LATER, THE BODY OF A GIRL... HATSUNE'S BODY... WAS FOUND IN THE MOUNTAINS AT OUR NATION'S BORDER...
MY SISTER AND I WERE SAVED FROM BEING "SPIRITED AWAY," BUT...
BUT THAT HAND...
.....

WHAT WAS THAT HAND I SAW IN THE MOUNTAINS...?
...!
AND THEN... THAT "FOXFIRE"...
NEITHER OF THOSE THINGS WERE TRICKS OF THE LIGHT OR HALLUCINATIONS...
SLAM
NNH... GH.
WHAT HAPPENED TO US WHEN WE WERE "SPIRITED AWAY"...?!

LEN...
LEN!
I...
SHIF
I'M SO GLAD... YOU WOULDN'T WAKE UP...
RI... SIS-?!
POMF

LORD KAIDOU SAVED YOU... HE SAID THE BANDITS FELL BACK...
FWIP
...LEN?!
...!
LORD KAIDOU...? BANDITS...?

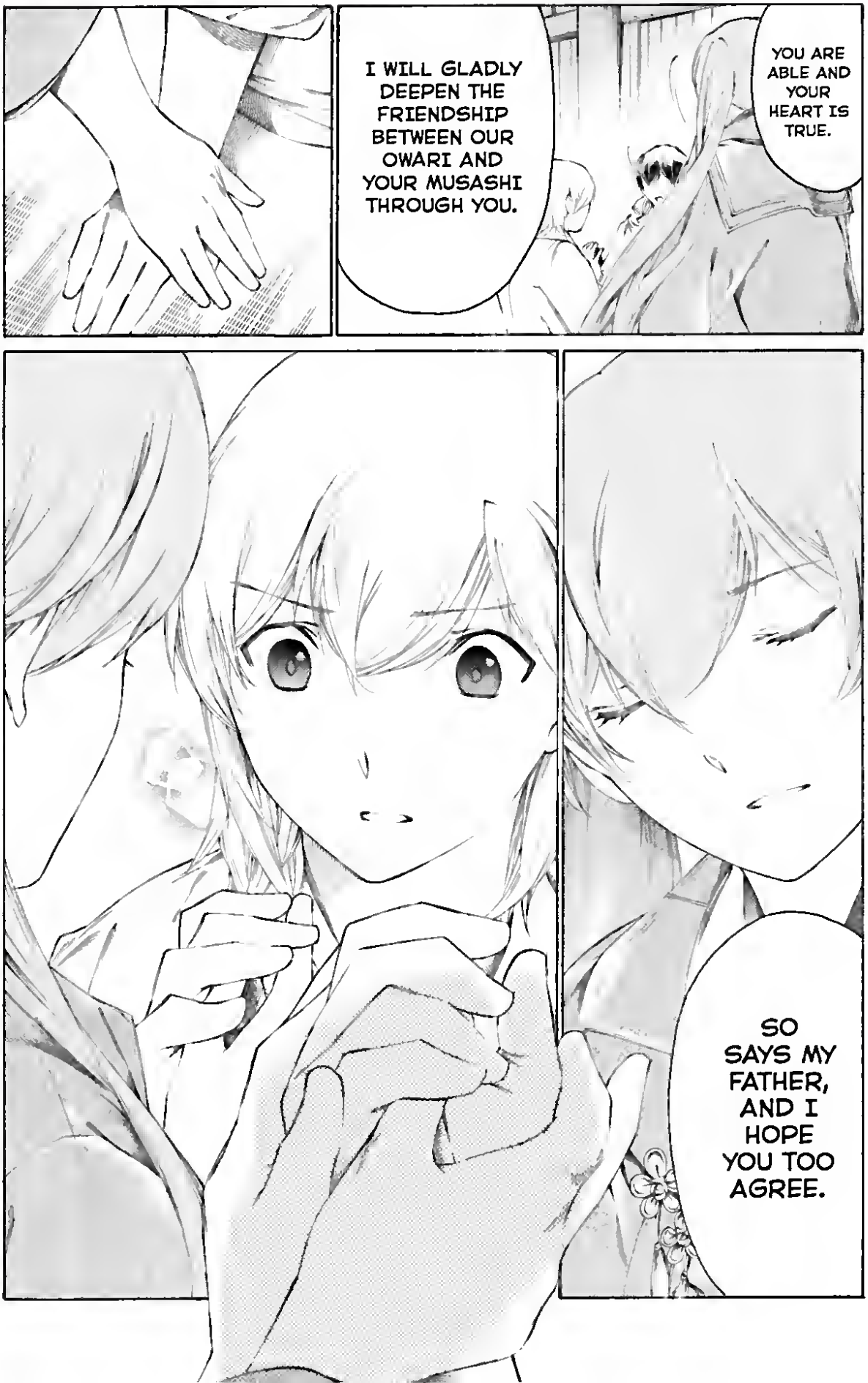
LEN, WAIT!
IT WAS AFTER WE WERE "SPIRITED AWAY" THAT RIN CHANGED...
THAT WAS WHEN... SHE FELL IN LOVE WITH... ME...
NO... THERE ARE MORE IMPORTANT THINGS AT HAND...

LORD KAIDOU!
ガラッ

L...
L...
...RUNNING IN HERE WITH YOUR NIGHT-CLOTHES ON!
LEN, YOU'RE INDE-CENT...
PLEASE FORGIVE ME!
LORD KAI-DOU!
SLAM

FOR A MAN WHO IS SET TO JOIN THE AODA FAMILY TO SHAME YOU WITH SUCH DISGRACEFUL CONDUCT MUST CAUSE YOU SUCH HUMILIATION...
I WAS IN-ATTENTIVE AND BLUNDERED INTO THOSE BANDITS, FORCING YOU TO SAVE MY LIFE...
わはは
WA HA HA HA
HA HA
WHAT?
PFH ...
HA... HA HA...

YOU ARE JUST AS OVERLY SERIOUS A YOUNG WARRIOR AS I HAVE BEEN TOLD.
AHA-HAHA... NO, NO.
LEN... WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
FATHER ?!
TALES OF YOUR VALOR ARE TOLD EVEN IN MY COUNTRY.
IN YOUR FIRST BATTLE YOU WERE BUT 14 YEARS OLD, AND STILL YOU PROTECTED THE PEACE OF MUSASHI FROM BARBARIC INVADERS. THE DAY BEFORE YESTERDAY WAS MUCH THE SAME.
YES YOU DID. MY FATHER AND YOUR SISTER WERE VERY WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
THE DAY BEFORE YESTERDAY...? I SLEPT MORE THAN TWO DAYS?

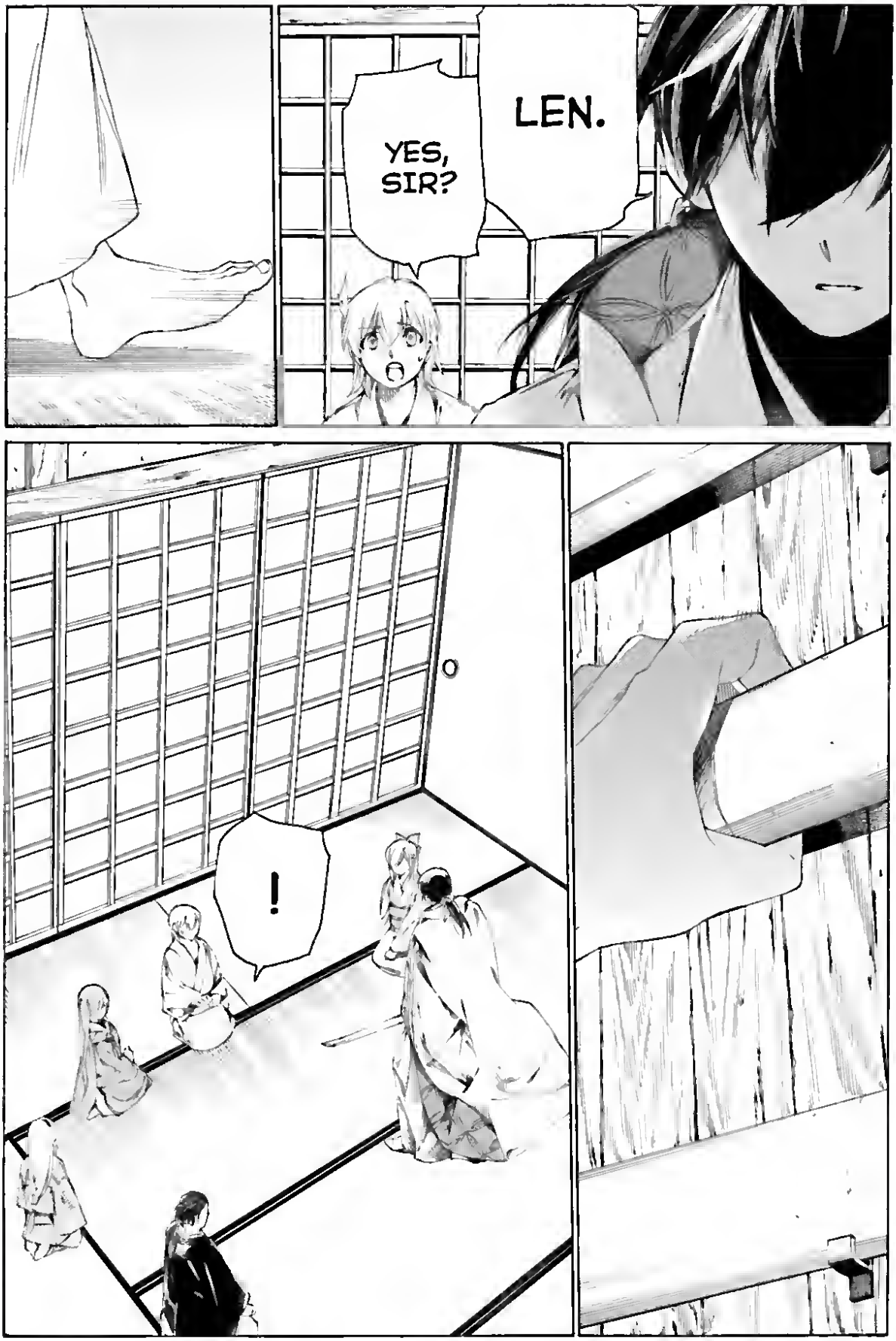

I WILL GLADLY DEEPEN THE FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN OUR OWARI AND YOUR MUSASHI THROUGH YOU.
YOU ARE ABLE AND YOUR HEART IS TRUE.
SO SAYS MY FATHER, AND I HOPE YOU TOO AGREE.

AH... ER... PARDON ME...
HOW LONG DO YOU TWO INTEND ON HOLDING HANDS?
BLUSH
.....
IN ANY EVENT, LEN...
...I AM BAFFLED AS TO THE REASON WHY YOUR GUARD WAS DOWN TO SUCH A DEGREE THAT YOU WERE BESET BY BANDITS.
IF YOU COULD EXPLAIN TO ME, PLEASE...
...WHAT EXACTLY HAPPENED ON THAT MOUN-TAIN?

WHA
AAA
AA
AA!!
OH, MY, MY.
I SEE... YOU SAW A "SMALL HAND" AT YOUR FOOT.
AND "FOX-FIRE" AS WELL...?
WHAT THE-- SCARY!!
LEN... TELLING SUCH WILD STORIES JUST TO EXPLAIN AWAY BEING SURPRISED BY BANDITS, AND TO LORD KAIDOU, IS JUST...
YOU ARE TOO EASILY FRIGHT-ENED, LUKA.
NAY, LORD KITAGAMI... I HARDLY BELIEVE A SERIOUS YOUNG FELLOW LIKE THIS WOULD TELL SUCH A LIE.
IS THIS TRUE, LEN?

IT IS, I SWEAR TO THE HEAVENS THAT I DO NOT LIE.
"SPIRITED AWAY," YOU SAY? I SEE.
IT MAY HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH THAT INCI-DENT.
WHEN WE WERE YOUNG, RIN AND I, AS WELL AS OUR CHILDHOOD COMPANION, WERE "SPIRITED AWAY" NEAR THOSE VERY MOUNTAINS.

LADY RIN, DO YOU RECALL?
NO... NOTH- ING.
SHF
...I SEE.

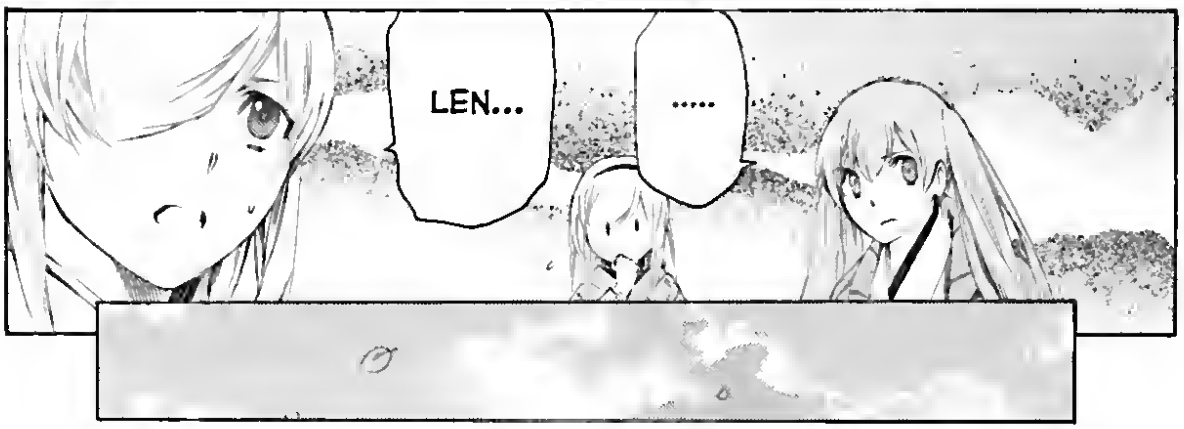

LEN.
YES, SIR?
!

DO YOU WISH TO CROSS SWORDS WITH ME?
WH...?!
?!

I UNDERSTAND YOUR EXPLANATION AS TO WHY IT WAS NOT INATTENTION THAT LET THOSE BANDITS THROUGH YOUR GUARD.
SO NOW I WOULD LIKE YOU TO DEFEND THE TRUTHFULNESS OF YOUR STATEMENT...
...AS WELL AS YOUR SUITABILITY FOR MY DAUGHTER...
...WITH THE SWEAT OF YOUR BODY.

IT IS TOO RECK-LESS!
LEN WAS UN-CONSCIOUS ONLY YES-TERDAY...
FWIP
KRSH
VERY WELL.

I WILL GLADLY CROSS SWORDS WITH LORD KAIDOU, CALLED "THE CHAMPION OF THE COMING GENERATION."


LEN...
.....

FWISH
FIGHT!

WHY HAS THIS COME TO PASS...?
WHY...
IF LEN EVER... DRIFTS AWAY FROM ME COMPLETELY, THEN...
HE HAS EVEN MANAGED TO RECOVER HIS MEMORIES OF BEING "SPIRITED AWAY"...
SINCE THIS WOMAN CAME, LEN HAS DRIFTED FURTHER AND FURTHER FROM ME...

DASH
I... I am sorry...
STARE
WA-CHOO!
?!
CLASH

They were so fast I could not see them at all.
FATHER ?!
HE ATTACKED HIS HEAD WITHOUT HESITATION, DESPITE THAT NEITHER ARE WEARING A MASK...
...YOU GO TOO FAR!

FWSH
SCRAPE
KLAK
KLAK

SOMEONE... STOP THEM...
UNCLE...
FOOSH

I HOPE...
ZOOM
I HOPE HE COMES OUT OF THIS SAFELY...

WHAT? WHY IS HE LOWER-ING HIS SWORD?!

LEN!!

THERE!!

CLAKSH
WHAT IS THE RESULT OF THE BATTLE OF THESE TWO MEN'S RESOLVE, SEEKING THE TRUTH?!